

SPRINGFIELD, PA — On Monday morning, Congressman Joe Sestak (PA-07) spoke to the Delaware County Chamber of Commerce during its annual Federal Forum.

"When I addressed this forum this time last year, I had been in office only about nine weeks," said Congressman Sestak. "I said then that I was committed to delivering results on the issues my constituents said matter most to them, and pillars that I believe are critical for improving our national security: Economic Security, Education Security, Health Security, Defense Security, and Environment and Energy Security. I would like to thank Delaware County Chamber of Commerce President Jeff Vermeulen for providing me the opportunity to update the citizens of Delaware County on my efforts to provide them the representation they deserve in the 110th Congress."

Sestak emphasized his plan to "bring Washington to the District." In the past 14 months he has convened more than a dozen major summits and town hall meetings designed to engage constituents, subject matter experts, and legislators in a continuous dialogue of his district's needs. From those events, Sestak, in turn, "brought the District to Washington." His legislative efforts have resulted in Majority Leader Steny Hoyer naming him the most productive freshman member of Congress.

Sestak commented positively on Delaware County's 4 percent unemployment rate, which is lower than the state (4.3%) and national (4.6%) averages, and manufacturing employment, which increased about 2% in the first half of 2007, while declining nationwide. However, he remarked that this region must prepare for an increasingly uncertain economic climate.

"When you adjust for inflation, median household income in this county is more than \$300 less than it was in 2001," said Congressman Sestak. "Additionally, population growth has been slow in Delaware County compared to the rest of the country, and our population over the age of 65, 14.25 percent, is well above the U.S. average of 12.45 percent. We must do more to bring new jobs to Delaware County that will attract young, talented people to help reverse these trends and boost our local economy."

Sestak referenced his work in organizing gatherings of business leaders to focus on the future economic security of his district. These culminated in December's Business Procurement Summit, which attracted 400 businesspeople, 40 large business contractors, and 15 federal and state government procurement agencies. The summit successfully provided local business unprecedented access to large corporate and government contractors.

Following this event, Nick Plante, President of Kinetix, informed Congressman Sestak that his attendance led to a contract with McGuire Air Force Base for his fire and life safety company. Also, Yong Choe, owner of Pioneer Machine and Tooling Co, made connections at the summit that led to a meeting at his facility with representatives from Boeing, Piasecki Aircraft, and other leading manufacturers in the area.

The meeting at Pioneer is one of many where Sestak has heard entrepreneurs discuss the difficulty of filling their employment needs. "The business leaders I have met with have consistently expressed frustration with the process of finding qualified and skilled employees."

In last year's appropriations process Sestak helped address this issue. For example, he ensured that money was allocated to Delaware County Community College and Cheyney University to improve their Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math programs. He also secured \$187,000 for the Foundation of the Delaware County Chamber of Commerce for workforce development and job readiness services, and convened an advisory committee, chaired by Dr. Paul Reid, President of the Williamson Free School of Mechanical Trades in Media, to address higher education and workforce issues. Notably, Sestak has planned a future summit for representatives of area technical and vocational schools, community colleges, chambers of commerce, high school guidance departments, and local business and labor leaders.

In addition to discussing the state of the area's economy, Sestak used the forum as an opportunity to give an additional example of how he is working to improve the other facets of national security:

Education Security

Sestak cosponsored the College Cost Reduction and Access Act of 2007, which demonstrates the 110th Congress' strong commitment to expanding accessibility to higher education, curbing college costs, and cleaning up the student loan industry. Signed into law on September 27, 2007, this legislation provides the single largest increase in college aid since the GI bill, at no new costs to taxpayers. This bill takes a giant leap forward in reducing the burden of student loans and expanding educational opportunity for students across America by expanding

financial assistance and working with student loan providers.

Health Security

To bring equity to the treatment of mental illness and substance abuse, Congressman Sestak recently partnered with Congressman Patrick Kennedy (D-RI) to successfully offer two amendments to H.R. 1538, the Wounded Warrior Assistance Act, which will improve mental health care for our wounded soldiers. The first amendment highlights the fact that mental health care is an essential component to the medical services offered to our Veterans and the members of our Armed Services by clarifying that 'medical care' as discussed in H.R. 1538 includes mental health care services.

The second amendment, also offered with Congressman Kennedy, requires the Secretary of the Department of Defense to develop a plan to help prevent Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and other stress-related psychopathologies (including substance abuse conditions) from developing in our military service members. In addition, it requires the Secretary to submit to Congress within 180 days a plan for establishing a Peer-Reviewed research program within the Defense Health Program's research and development function to research the prevention of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and how to best strengthen the psychological resiliency of our military service members. Both amendments passed with unanimous support.

Economic Security

With economic growth slowing nationwide and many economic analysts predicting a recession, Sestak supported a temporary, timely, and targeted tax relief for the American people who need it most. He joined a bi-partisan effort to pass the Recovery Rebates and Economic Stimulus for the American People Act of 2008. This Stimulus Package was designed to create additional spending and investment in our economy to reduce the impact of an economic recession.

"This bi-partisan economic stimulus package will help hardworking Americans who are struggling with the rising costs of living, from skyrocketing energy and health care costs to soaring mortgage payments in the sub-prime market by providing tax rebates," said Sestak.

Additionally, the stimulus package provides incentives for investment by small businesses, which create more than 70% of jobs in the United States. These companies are the most likely to suffer during times of recession when they are overshadowed by big businesses and overlooked by consumers.

Defense Security

Sestak authored a successful amendment to the Defense Authorization Bill that provided greater contracting opportunities for small businesses by requiring market research for contracts greater than \$1 million. He also secured \$23.4 million in defense appropriations, fourth most among all House or Senate Freshmen.

Sestak recently assumed the vice chairmanship of the Rotorcraft Caucus in the House, a position to which he is well suited because of his military background. He recognizes that a strong rotorcraft industry is not only good for the defense of this country, but is also integral to the economy of his district.

Environment and Energy Security

Sestak was a strong supporter of H.R. 6, the most complete energy independence legislation in years. It reduces carbon emissions, creates green jobs, and increases clean renewable energy production. This legislation promotes investment in renewable fuels infrastructure and supports research and development of new bioenergy sources. It invests research to make biofuel production more efficient and improve the energy efficiency in biorefinery facilities to reduce energy consumption in the development of biofuels.

Constituent Services

"Of all that we have accomplished in the past year, I am most pleased by the performance of my District Office in serving the needs of our constituents," said Sestak. "My District Office has worked hard with the Social Security Administration, Department of Veterans Affairs, Department of Commerce, Department of Health and Human Services, Department of Justice,

U.S. Postal Service, the Federal Aviation Administration, Internal Revenue Service and dozens more county, state and federal agencies to ensure the correct distribution of services from government to its citizens.

"An Iraq War veteran lost two legs; and my staff helped get his fiancée here from Cambodia through contacts with the Department of State. A young veteran returned from Iraq suffering from a serious traumatic brain injury and my staff helped him receive appropriate VA benefits.

"We got a struggling family with 3 children, two of whom are disabled, help to keep their home from foreclosure by seeking forbearance measures from the mortgage company. Over the summer, my staff members volunteered their time to help expedite passports for travelers caught up in confusing and contradictory requirements. Anne Vaughan of my staff saved more marriages than Dr. Phil by helping out stressed couples and their families – it was not a relaxing summer for many Americans."

"In the past year, my goal has been to engage as many people as possible in the process of government," said Sestak. "Nothing great in this country has ever been achieved without the enthusiastic and bipartisan engagement of our population. I look forward to a positive and productive working relationship with the citizens of Delaware County for years to come."

Born and raised in Delaware County, former 3-star Admiral Joe Sestak served in the Navy for 31 years and now serves as the Representative from the 7th District of Pennsylvania. He led a series of operational commands at sea, including Commander of an aircraft carrier battle group of 30 U.S. and allied ships with over 15,000 sailors and 100 aircraft that conducted operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. After 9/11, Joe was the first Director of "Deep Blue," the Navy's anti-terrorism unit that established strategic and operations policies for the "Global War on Terrorism." He served as President Clinton's Director for Defense Policy at the National Security Council in the White House, and holds a Ph.D. in Political Economy and Government from Harvard University. According to the office of the House Historian, Joe is the highest-ranking former military officer ever elected to the Congress.

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